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Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal

FOR RELEASE: AT WILL

ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP AN URGENT NEED

MONTREAL, JANUARY 21, 1969--The current revolt of young people against so many aspects of society can be checked, insists R.G. Rogers, General Secretary of the Montreal YMCA.

Better still, it can be resolved so that almost everyone would benefit by combining the energy and idealism of youth with the experience and resources of adults, he told a Montreal Rotary Club luncheon.

"One of the main keys is front-line face-to-face leadership--leadership by example, leadership which proposes guidelines, encourages discussion, shares values and heeds criticism," he suggests.

Though young people are sometimes naive when they demand overnight solutions to pressing problems, they have throughout history prompted many vital reforms.

"There have always been tensions between generations, and there always will be," cautioned Mr. Rogers. "Many of them are desirable, but some are destructive. All must be carefully assessed."

He warned, for example, that the corrosive bitterness with which so many young people attack adult values cannot be dismissed as mere boyish over-enthusiasm.

"Our field workers have been made jarringly aware that quite a number of youthful activists have only one firm aim--to destroy society."

He noted that these hostile militants include many idealists.

"But, if left unanswered, they could adversely arouse the growing number of young people who express their disaffection with society

by apathetically withdrawing from it."

He observed that "creeping alienation" had some time ago spread to youngsters of 13 and young adults in their 20s, as well as those in the age group between.

"Too many young people seem to think that they alone care about justice and human values," diagnosed Mr. Rogers. "They just can't seem to see how deeply their concern is shared by so many adults."

He emphasized, however, that this confusion and lack of perception works two ways. "Many adults don't realize that hostility or apathy are often the results of impatience with failure to correct inequities and unfulfilled desires to serve."

Separated by this "perception gap", both groups become even more confused by one of "the most insidious dilemmas" of our time--how to sort out the differences between right and wrong.

Mr. Rogers suggested that the search for ways to correct social injustice could unify different age groups instead of dividing them.

"If they could only be made to realize it, all people, young and old, have many common concerns and some vision and experience to contribute to solutions," he said.

As for associations such as the YMCA, their role is to provide the sort of counsel and create the sort of environment which will help people develop their own solutions--not provide pat answers.

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